

## Message Text

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73

ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 AID-05 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02

EA-07 SAJ-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SS-15 /092 W

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R 291542Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY BAMA KO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4344

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAMA KO 2622

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: UR, ML, PFOR, MILI

SUBJ: SOKOLOV VISIT-THE IMPLICATIONS

REF: (A) BAMA KO 2544 (B) BAMA KO 818

1. SOVIET DEFENSE VICE MINISTER SERGEI SOKOLOV, AS REPORTED REFTEL A, VISITED MALI JULY 19-23, AT THE INVITATION OF MALIAN DEFENSE MINISTER KISSIMA DOUKARA. COMMUNIQUE AND SPEECHES, AS EXPECTED, CONTAIN LITTLE OF SUBSTANCE ALTHOUGH EMPHASIS WAS ON SOVIET ARMY'S HELP TO THE "YOUNG" MALIAN ARMYOM

2. SOKOLOV LAST VISITED MALI IN 1972, WHEN, ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR, MALIAN-SOVIET RELATIONS WERE AT A LOW POINT. THE FOUR ISSUES DISCUSSED THEN WERE

(1) SOVIET AID FOR THE GOLD MINE AT KALANA; (2) POOR PERFORMANCE OF SOVIET SUPPLIED CEMENT PLANT AT DIAMOU; (3) REPAYMENT OF SOVIET LOANS TO MALI; AND (4) MILITARY AID. FRENCH AMBASSADOR BELIEVES AGENDA THIS  
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TIME WAS IDENTICAL.

3. PRESENT SITUATION REGARDING THESE ITEMS IS AS FOLLOWS: (A) NOTHING IS ACTUALLY HAPPENING AT KALANA; (B) THE CEMENT PLANT USES ANTIQUATED PROCESS, LACKS SPARE PARTS AND CANNOT BE EXPANDED TO PRODUCE MORE THAN ITS RATED CAPACITY OF 50,000 TONS PER YEAR WHEN MALI NEEDS 150,000. IMPORTED CEMENT IS STILL CHEAPER; (B) SOVIET LOANS TO MALI TOTAL, ACCORDING TO FRENCH AND CHINESE SOURCES, ABOUT \$140 MILLION. THIS IS INCREASE OVER ORIGINAL FRENCH ESTIMATE OF \$100 MILLION. (MALI'S ANNUAL BUDGET IS ABOUT \$110 MILLION.) MALI CANNOT REPAY EVEN THE INTEREST; (D) MILITARY AID CONTINUES TO BE ESSENTIAL TO MALI AND IS SOVIET'S STRONGEST BARGAINING CARD HERE.

4. SOKOLOV AND DOUKARA HELD SEVERAL WORKING SESSIONS AT DEFENSE MINISTRY AND PROBABLY REVIEWED ABOVE ITEMS. WE DOUBT THAT ANY REAL PROGRESS WAS MADE. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT SOKOLOV'S REAL OBJECTIVE WAS TO GAIN MALIAN AGREEMENT TO SOVIET STUDIES OF MALIAN AIRFIELDS AND TO UPGRADE EXISTING FIELDS SUCH AS SOVIETS HAVE ALREADY DONE AT MOPTI. THIS FIELD IS NOW 3000 METERS LONG, 200 METERS WIDE WITH RADAR AND OTHER NAVAIDS, ACCORDING TO FRENCH AMBASSADOR. SOVIETS, WE BELIEVE, WANT TO BE LOGISTICALLY PREPARED SHOULD THEY OBTAIN MALIAN AGREEMENT TO USE MALI FOR RESUPPLY OF MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, AS WAS THE CASE DURING THE FIGHTING IN ANGOLA.

5. MALIAN GOVERNMENT PERMISSION WOULD, OF COURSE, BE A PREREQUISITE TO SOVIET USE OF THESE AIR FIELDS. THE MALIANS, HOWEVER, WILL BE IN A WEAKER POSITION EACH COMING YEAR TO RESIST SOVIET PRESSURES, SHOULD THE MALIANS BE OPPOSED, WHICH WOULD BE UNLIKELY. THE FOREIGN MINISTER, SECRETARY GENERAL AND DIRECTOR GENERAL HAVE ALL TOLD CHARGE, DATING FROM LAST NOVEMBER, THAT MALI WOULD OFFER ALL ASSISTANCE POSSIBLE (I.E., NON-MILITARY) TO ANY STRUGGLE FOR LIBERATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA. REFTEL B, "STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MALI" DEVELOPED THIS THEME. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. ABOVE ANALYSIS JIBES WITH ARRIVAL OF INCREASED NUMBER OF SOVIET MILITARY ADVISERS WHO COULD BE USED FOR TECHNICAL SURVEYS OF LANDING FIELDS (WE COUNT 38 STRIPS IN VARIOUS STAGES OF DISREPAIR).

7. ADDITIONAL SOVIET OBJECTIVE, BUT PROBABLY

SECONDARY, IS EFFORT TO COUNTER CHINESE WHO CLEARLY  
DO A BETTER JOB IN MALI AND ARE GENUINELY APPRECIATED  
BY MALIANS (SOVIETS ARE NO.)

8. CONCLUSION: SOKOLOV VISIT EVIDENTLY ACHIEVED  
ITS OBJECTIVE OF PREPARING FURTHER THE GROUND  
FOR A RENEWAL OF SOVIET (OR CUBAN) MILITARY ACTIVITY  
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.  
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